



Middle Grades Spotlight

A Newsletter for California's Middle Grades Educators

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Summer 2004

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A Message from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction

As another school year comes to a close, it's time for students to move from one grade to another. For students who are moving from one school to another, however, the transition is a more complex issue, not only for the students but also for parents, teachers, and administrators. This issue of the *Middle Grades Spotlight* features articles from California's three 2004 Schools To Watch – Taking Center Stage model schools that share their best practices for smoothing transitions.

Young adolescents generally look forward to moving away from elementary school to an environment designed specifically for their intellectual, physical, and emotional needs. Yet if the transition is not well coordinated between schools and with parents, students can flounder, and valuable teaching and learning time can be lost in the change.

The 2004 Rand report, *Focus on the Wonder Years, Challenges Facing the American Middle School*, recommends that alternative models to the typical middle school structure should be considered to reduce multiple transitions for students and allow for better coordination of goals from kindergarten through grade twelve. Citing the continued lackluster performance of middle school students, especially in the eighth grade, the report suggests possibly eliminating the middle school configuration as a means of increasing student achievement. The report also identifies other significant factors that impede student achievement, leaving the discussion open to further research and debate.

One of my goals for the High Performing High Schools Initiative is to smooth the transition from middle school to high school and from high school to postsecondary education. Preparing our young adolescents for the future demands that we have solid plans in place for transferring students from one environment to another so that they continue to make academic progress.

Because of the hard work of California educators, there are numerous middle school success stories about students making smooth transitions and excellent academic growth. I congratulate and thank Alvarado Intermediate School, John Glenn Middle School of International Studies, and Medea Creek Middle School for being our 2004 Schools To Watch – Taking Center Stage designees and for sharing their transitional practices with us.

JACK O'CONNELL

Smoothing Transitions for Middle Grades Students

Effective Transition Activities To and From Middle School

The following list provides suggestions to help students make transitions to and from middle school.

- **Transitional activities are planned well in advance.**
- **Transitions work best when all stakeholders (parents, counselors, receiving teachers, sending teachers, administrators, and students) are involved in the planning process.**
- **Personal and institutional connections and relationships are important. Leadership teams from sending and receiving schools meet regularly to discuss students, curriculum, and achievement data.**
- **Informed and involved parents are important to a student's successful transition. Parents need to know what is happening, when it is happening, and how it will affect their children. The communication process starts months before the student's transition and continues throughout the year.**
- **Social activities for students help them lower their anxiety and create positive bonds with other students. "Veteran" students from the receiving school can help newcomers feel welcomed and connected.**

(Continued on page 3)

In this edition of the *Middle Grades Spotlight*, the focus is on California's 2004 Schools To Watch – Taking Center Stage designees. Alvarado Intermediate School, John Glenn Middle School of International Studies, and Medea Creek Middle School are the California 2004 Schools To Watch – Taking Center Stage designees, and they possess the essential components (academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structure and processes) that characterize them as high performance middle schools.

Hanna Skandera, California Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, recently commented that the transferring of middle grades students between schools could be analogous to a relay race. The middle runner (middle grades school) must quickly grasp the baton (students, records, data, etc.) from the first runner (elementary school), strategically make up for any lost time and gain ground during the lap, and smoothly hand off the baton to the next runner (high school).

Several middle school principals whose "relay teams" are effectively running the relay and winning the race write the following articles in this newsletter. To learn more about these schools and previously designated California Schools To Watch – Taking Center Stage designees, take a virtual tour at <http://www.clms.net/> or contact the school directly. (See school contact information on each school profile.)

Become a 2005 School To Watch – Taking Center Stage Model

Applications to become a 2005 School To Watch – Taking Center Stage (STW-TCS) model are available at the California League of Middle Schools Web site at <http://www.clms.net>. The due date for 2005 applications is October 15, 2004. You may also want to view the school self-rating rubric that is accessible on the California Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/mg/documents/criteria.pdf> to see where you are on the road to high performance.

"The school is a part of a larger educational system. Articulation exists to help students make effective transitions from feeder elementary schools and to destination high schools. The school is not an island unto itself. It draws upon others' experience, research, and wisdom; it enters into relationships, such as networks and community partnerships that benefit students' and teachers' development and learning."

Excerpt from Schools To Watch – Taking Center Stage, School Self-rating Criteria

(Continued from page 2)

- **The expeditious transfer of data and information about student academic performance is crucial to a student's successful transition. Administrators need preliminary data early in the calendar year to plan and schedule appropriate courses for incoming students. Receiving teachers need specific data about which standards their new students have mastered or not mastered before the new school year begins.**
- **A standards-based diagnostic assessment of all incoming students should take place before the new school year. Teachers can then begin appropriate instruction immediately without wasting time on needless review or redundant instruction.**
- **A wide array of student data and information assists the receiving school staff with planning for the necessary intervention programs and curriculum support needed by the students.**

Sharing Student Data to Inform Instructional Practices

As students advance from one educational level to another, it is important that their data transfer with them to assist school staff members to determine appropriate placement and instructional practice. For these data to be useful, however, they must be accessible to educators and in a format that can be easily disaggregated and shared from site to site. Data are particularly helpful when elementary students move to middle school and again when middle school students transfer to high school.

Many software programs can assist administrators with the important tasks of collecting, mining, disaggregating, applying, and sharing student data, which are the basis for data-driven decision making. Running these programs results in getting better, more accurate information into the hands of educators so that they can make good instructional decisions that will benefit students.

Busy administrators who need quick, reliable information and resources related to data-driven decision making can obtain assistance from the Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL) at <http://www.portical.org>. An informative Internet portal designed for administrators, TICAL is one of the free, statewide education technology services funded through the California Department of Education. Administrators, whether they are site-level principals or district superintendents, are able to quickly find information and resources that will help them in their leadership roles. Administrators will also find resources on a variety of other topics, such as technology planning, curriculum, and professional development for staff. The portal also contains the Academic Performance Index (API) calculator, profiles of technology leaders, and interesting educational facts.

Below are two administrative resources selected from TICAL's comprehensive database.

eScholar (Vision Associates) @ <http://www.escholar.com>

A data warehouse specifically designed for school systems, eScholar brings together, in a single location, all the data that a school district has and makes that data accessible to authorized users for easy analysis. These data include attendance, grades, demographics, test scores, program participation, economic status, and much more. A critical function of this data warehouse is to enable administrators to format all the data in different ways to answer questions or provide comparisons between data elements. Information may be shared districtwide to target and promote student achievement.

Cal-PASS @ <http://www.cal-pass.org>

The California Partnership for Achieving Student Success (Cal-PASS) collects, analyzes, and shares student data to track student performance and improve student success. Created by a grant from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, Cal-PASS may be used in the K-12, community college, and university systems.

By Joyce Hinkson, Consultant, California Department of Education

~ One of California's 2004 Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage Model Schools ~



Alvarado Intermediate School

Rowland Unified School District
1901 South Desire Avenue
Rowland Heights, California
Nancy Padilla, Principal

2003 School Profile

Community: Suburban

Enrollment: 1,152

Demographic information:

- 41% Asian
- 39% Hispanic/Latino
- 10% White
- 6% Filipino

Grade levels: 7-8

2003 API: 776 (up 49 pts. since 2000)

Reduced-price and free lunches: 41%

English learners: 19%

Mobility: 11%

As a 2004 *School-To-Watch* model middle school, Alvarado Intermediate (Alvarado) has been coined “The Little Engine That Could.” Given its diverse student population of nearly 1,200 seventh and eighth graders, Alvarado serves a diverse population, including economically disadvantaged, special education students, Gifted and Talented Education students, and students who speak at home languages other than English. Alvarado’s 760 English learners represent 44 different languages. Alvarado has put into action its educational philosophy that **all** students will achieve at the highest levels. An important element in realizing this vision is the critical role Alvarado plays in its students’ two-year transition from elementary school to intermediate school and then to high school.

The Bridge To High School

Alvarado places a priority on getting kids ready to enter high school. Counselors meet one-on-one with every eighth grader to chart an individual course of study. Schoolwide articulation time with the destination high school, in addition to individual release time, is available for Alvarado teachers to observe the content and teaching methodologies of high school subjects. As a result, Alvarado’s high school courses, such as Spanish I, geometry, and earth science, facilitate academic acceleration while maintaining the rigor and integrity of the high school curriculum.

Middle School – The Bridge From Childhood To Teen Years

Alvarado’s educators believe that cross-curricular connections help reinforce important concepts and a shared responsibility for essential standards. For that reason, Alvarado uses school-within-a-school model and interdisciplinary teaming. This invaluable student-centered structure gives the students a sense of belonging and allows for critical teacher dialogue and planning during a common preparation period. Moreover, staff members in every department and course develop and implement strategies for supporting schoolwide targets of writing, reading, and mathematics as identified in the annual school plan.

One of the purposes of Alvarado's interdisciplinary teams is to have students from diverse backgrounds and abilities work together in friendly competition against other teams in achieving positive goals for the school. Alvarado's Interdisciplinary Teams create heterogeneous groupings across students' academic abilities, English acquisition levels, special education needs, grade levels, and gender ratios. In addition, this practice of teaming students creates small communities for learning in which stable, close, and safe relationships are fostered. Teaming also lays the groundwork needed to ease transitions facing young adolescents.

Alvarado maintains an environment that supports the inclusion of all students, particularly students served by the Special Education and English Learner departments. The frequent and collaborative communication among and between departments fosters a network of schoolwide advocates for the students with special needs. Alvarado also commits funding for hiring instructional aides to ensure student success at school. Although the delivery system may be modified, Alvarado's Special Day Class students receive the same core curriculum as their peers and are mainstreamed in physical education and elective classes. Resource Specialist Program students receive, per their individualized education plans, an extra period of credentialed instruction in such areas as reading, writing, math, study/organizational skills, or life skills. Alvarado has after-school support programs to ensure that all students meet state standards. These programs include after-school tutoring, the English Learners Club, the Phonics Club (teaches literacy to the lowest performing students), and academies (mini-courses that target specific learning gaps found by a careful analysis of the school's standardized tests scores). Alvarado's intent is to provide all students with the support and interventions they need to make successful transitions into and out of middle school.

The administration and staff at Alvarado understand that a student-centered focus encourages student involvement, provides for equal learning, and upholds a strong academic foundation. Along that vein, Alvarado's exploratory and advanced elective courses use students' talents and accommodate students' interests. Alvarado offers a variety of elective classes and exploratory classes that provide avenues to showcase students' skills through performances, competitions, or projects. Alvarado is one of the remaining intermediate schools in the area to retain its fine visual and performing arts programs, which are built into the school day's electives. Keeping high quality arts programs in tough budget times has meant that financial sacrifices have had to be made in other areas. Alvarado feels that these are worthy trade-offs, keeping the school's commitment to getting all students involved and "plugged in."

Alvarado's wealth of age-appropriate co-curricular activities responds to the students' social needs and helps develop student identity. Despite budget cuts, Alvarado maintains an extensive after-school program that reinforces state standards, promotes social skills, and permits students to interact with teachers in a more informal setting. The unusually high attendance rates at all the after-school activities attest to Alvarado's responsiveness to the need for a student-centered, age-relevant focus.

Staff at Alvarado recognizes that positive reinforcement can be a springboard for motivating student effort and greater involvement. Students are acknowledged not only for their academic achievement but also for school participation, perfect attendance, offering help in the classroom, and showing concern for others. With the help of a very active Parent

Teacher Student Association (PTSA), the last week of school is devoted to activities recognizing eighth graders. The focus on student assets rather than deficits creates a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose.

In spite of having fewer resources than in previous years at its disposal, Alvarado has steadily built and strengthened community alliances and business partnerships that have contributed greatly to the success of students' school transitions. Alvarado's weekly newsletters, schoolwide parent conferences, parent representation in almost every school venue, homework hotlines, school Web sites, and over 100 percent PTSA membership are manifestations of the importance placed on school, parent, and student relationships at Alvarado. If the analogy of middle school as a bridge that allows students to travel from elementary to high school, then involved stakeholders are the fortification necessary for their safe passage.

By Nancy Padilla, Principal, Alvarado Intermediate School
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~ One of California's 2004 Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage Model Schools ~



John Glenn Middle School of International Studies

Desert Sands Unified School District
79-655 Miles Avenue
Indio, California
Carole Ferraud, Principal

2003 School Profile

Community: Rural / Suburban

Enrollment: 1,350

Demographic information:

- 52% White
- 41% Hispanic/Latino
- 2% African American
- 2% Asian

Grade levels: 6-7-8

2003 API: 735 (up 54 points in one year)

Reduced-price and free lunches: 23%

English learners: 12%

Mobility: 15%

John Glenn Middle School of International Studies (John Glenn) is a state-of-the-art school that opened in September 2001. John Glenn is a part of a magnet triad with the neighboring elementary and high schools, thus forming a seamless kindergarten through grade twelve program. Educators at John Glenn are seeking authorization as an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (IBMYP). The IBMYP program promotes interdisciplinary curriculum, inquiry-based learning, higher-level thinking skills, and an overall international focus. The learning focus at John Glenn is the application of academic skills supported by a strong foundation built through cooperative relationships between the students' school and homes.

The staff at John Glenn fully embraces the philosophy and recommendations of the California middle school reform document, *Taking Center Stage*. In concert with the magnet theme of international studies, the aims and objectives of the IBMYP has guided the careful development of a rigorous standards-based curriculum. Innovative scheduling and specific support systems provide John Glenn's students with access to the tools and safety nets that will ensure their success in the school's program.

Smoothing Transitions for Kindergarten through Grade Twelve

Educators at John Glenn have discovered that the transition for students from fifth grade to sixth grade are vital predictors of student success in middle school; likewise, the transition from eighth grade to ninth grade provides the same kind of predictors for high school. The entire kindergarten to twelfth grade district system works to facilitate transitions.

Students and families begin to have a clear understanding of the program and its specifics at each grade level, beginning in kindergarten, and administrators from the three levels of elementary, middle, and high school collaborate on a regular basis, which contributes to a seamless program, kindergarten through grade twelve. While some anxieties still exist when students move from fifth grade to sixth grade and again from eighth grade to ninth grade, the anxieties are less than when the three levels operated more independently of each other.

Transfer of Incoming Students

John Glenn has designed specific programs to help incoming students and to make certain that all the students have safety nets in place to ensure success. All the sixth and seventh grade students at John Glen are enrolled in a grade level course called Approaches to Learning Academic Seminar (ATLAS). The ATLAS class addresses study skills, organizational skills, time management, and test taking skills. The foundation for the ATLAS curriculum is the Advancement for Individual Determination methodologies, IBMYP aims and objectives, and core standards focused on remediation or acceleration and enrichment. The ATLAS teachers work closely with their students to create a strong support system and a cohesive team atmosphere. The results of the ATLAS classes are the development of a close-knit family atmosphere, the availability of a trusted adult for students, a wonderful initial contact for parents, and the creation of a safe haven for students to share concerns, ideas, successes, and challenges.

Counselors at the elementary and middle schools work together to identify at-risk students making the transition into middle school. Working collaboratively together, elementary and middle level counselors develop 'success' strategies to address the needs of individual students. At-risk sixth grade students are paired up with older middle school peers and an ATLAS teacher who can provide individualized guidance to these students.

Transfer of Outgoing Students

Eighth grade students participate in a course called Inquiry Projects. Inquiry Projects is a culmination of the IBMYP "Areas of Interaction" into a project that may lead to a student's eighth grade promotion with Honors or Distinction. Inquiry Projects provides students with an opportunity to explore and express personal interests through a formal presentation to a panel of teachers and community members. Inquiry teachers are mentors who provide support for students as they research, organize, create, and reflect on this culminating middle school project. The IBMYP encompasses grades six through ten. Students are

required to do a personal project as a part of the final assessments that lead to a Middle Years Certificate in tenth grade. Having a familiarity with an Inquiry Project in eighth grade helps John Glenn's students enter ninth grade and high school with the confidence to complete the Middle Years Certificate and prepared for the academic road ahead.

Staff at John Glenn and the receiver high school collaborates on a regular basis to ensure that course content, along with transitional information, facilitate a smooth flow for students from middle school to high school. The IBMYP coordinators meet with eighth graders and their parents individually to address the requirements for high school and develop long-range plans.

Transition Requires Structure, Planning, and Support

Core teachers and students at John Glenn Middle School are heterogeneously organized within their grade levels into smaller learning communities called academies. The school day is divided into eight learning periods. During the eight learning periods for students, two periods are designated as planning periods for teachers. One period is a personal preparation period to allow teachers to work individually, and the other period is a structured common planning time for academic teachers to work collaboratively. The daily personal preparation period ensures that teachers remain focused during the common planning time on integrated curriculum and instructional teaming. The common planning time also allows the teachers to address individual student's instructional needs, to make referrals to local and outside resources, and to work with parents.

John Glenn schedules both daily common planning times and weekly times to plan vertical and horizontal articulation. This extended planning ensures that all staff members have opportunities to discuss and clarify what individual students should know and be able to do. All grade levels and all the interdisciplinary teams work toward making certain that all students learn what they need to learn. At John Glenn, this effort is fully coordinated and articulated. It is also supported and reinforced through the IBYMP.

Teachers at John Glenn work collectively to provide a vast array of safety nets and targeted support for students. Academies have regular schedules that allow students to seek assistance and tutoring during lunch and before and after school. Because academies within one grade level regularly collaborate with each other, students are able to seek tutoring or extra help from any teacher on campus. All academies provide regularly scheduled before- and after-school tutoring for any student who wants to attend. Teachers regularly regroup students to provide additional support and extra help for students as needed.

Constant communication between the teachers at John Glenn and the teachers from the feeder elementary schools and the destination high school ensures that the district's curriculum is reinforcing, not repetitive, and that the students are well prepared for the rigors of high school.

By Carole Ferraud, Principal, John Glenn Middle School of International Studies
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~ One of California's 2004 Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage Model Schools ~



Medea Creek Middle School

Oak Park Unified School District
1002 Doubletree Road
Oak Park, California
Laurel Ford, Principal

2003 School Profile

Community: Suburban

Enrollment: 991

Demographic information:

- 84% White
- 10% Asian
- 2% Hispanic/Latino

Grade levels: 6-7-8

2003 API: 865 (up 27 points since 2000)

Reduced-price and free lunches: 2%

English learners: 1%

Mobility: 9%

Medea Creek Middle School (Medea) educators believe that transfer issues have an important effect on student success. Middle schools face these issues on two fronts—both with the elementary change and again when the adolescents move on to high school. Therefore, strategies must be varied and age-appropriate to anticipate student developmental needs and the school environment involved in the transition.

Elementary to Middle

The transition from elementary to middle school is managed on several different fronts.

Parent Transition and Communication

The strategies used at Medea for incoming sixth graders include both program and organizational structures. It is important to make new parents feel comfortable in the middle school surroundings; therefore, the process is started in the spring with a meeting for all incoming sixth grade parents. The middle school program is explained; administrators and counselors are introduced; and concerns, such as the role of parents in a middle school, the safety of students, and the issues of changing adolescents, are addressed. A critical part of this program is helping parents understand the maturing process that takes place.

The middle school years are also a transitional time for parents. As one parent remarked, "My child wants me to drop him around the corner from school so other kids don't see me." This new behavior is a shock to parents whose children loved having them volunteer in elementary school.

Medea staff members emphasize that parent involvement is still critical at this level—perhaps even more so, but this involvement must take a different and subtler form. Parents need to be aware of what their children are doing in class, with homework, and with peers.

Parents must decide when to allow their child to stretch his or her wings and take responsibility and when he or she is not yet ready for independence. It is a subtle dance but a critical one.

Middle grades students feel invincible. They do not understand or believe that negative consequences will really happen to them. However, their bodies and minds are changing into those of young adults, and each student matures at a different rate. All youngsters, especially those transferring into middle school, need to have strong positive parent support to encourage them to grow and to reassure them when they encounter difficulties.

Staff at Medea continues this support of parents throughout middle school. Support includes parent education programs, such as a recent one on parenting issues, and evening coffees and chats with the principal on issues of concern, such as open conversations between the parents and the principal. Parents are encouraged to volunteer at school or to be a part of the Parent Faculty Club and the School Site Council. Communication with the school is encouraged and made easy through the use of e-mail and teacher Web pages. Newsletters are sent to all parents monthly. All sixth grade teachers send weekly notes home every Friday listing important grades the student has received, upcoming tests and projects, and school activities to note on a calendar. These Friday notes include space for parents and teachers to ask questions and provide responses. The notes are then signed by the parents and returned to the students' teachers.

All students are required to use their plan books, and teachers require that students record homework at the end of each period. In short, communication with parents is a priority, and the goal is to have parents understand that they are a critical part of the team that is ensuring student success.

Student Transition and Communication

For elementary students who are transferring to middle school, the process is started in the spring with students connecting with other students. Fifth grade students write letters to current sixth grade, and a sixth grade teacher with a few students visit each elementary class to answer questions and talk about the middle school. Fifth graders are invited to come to the middle school for a program and a tour.

A summer school class called Introduction to Middle School is offered. Through the class the students are introduced to Medea administrators and counselors, given an orientation to the school's campus, and taught computer and study skills. In August students come for registration and have an opportunity to try their lockers and locate classes. On the first day of school, student government members act as guides and help the new sixth graders navigate the day.

Organizational and Structural Support

The organization of classes also facilitates the transfer of students. Sixth grade students have their core classes blocked into humanities (English and social studies with one teacher) and math and science (with one teacher). When possible, the two student groups are the same and share the same two teachers. This set-up provides a gentle change from the one-teacher model in elementary school, and it also allows for two teachers to work

together to help students and to get to know them really well. The students mix with other students in elective classes and physical education, but they remain with only sixth graders in those core classes. All the classes are heterogeneously grouped with Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) students, and some classes have special education clusters. Sixth graders have their own lunch and they also have their own dances after school. However, sixth graders are still a part of the larger school and participate in schoolwide activities, such as community service drives, fund-raisers, assemblies, and school events, such as Oktoberfest.

Information on students for placement and support is obtained in several ways. When fifth graders come for their tours, their teachers meet with the middle school counselors to discuss students with particular needs. Data on these students are sent electronically through Medea's student information system. An additional orientation is held for incoming parents of special education students to discuss the continuum of services available to their children. Information on identified and potential GATE students is sent by the elementary schools to the GATE coordinator who keeps a portfolio on each student. A district meeting for GATE students is held to explain the programs for kindergarten through grade twelve. District advisory committees for special education, GATE, and English learners are either involved in the school's transition meetings or have input into their child's specialized programs. State and district test scores are used for special placements and are sent by the elementary schools.

Teachers are helped to meet the needs of middle school students through in-service opportunities and readings with an emphasis on state recommended documents. The teaching staff has referred to California's quality criteria, *Caught in the Middle* and now *Taking Center Stage*, to develop a program beyond academics that meets the needs of children of this age group. Individual staff members have also made presentations about adolescents' developmental needs.

Middle to High School

The transition from middle school to high school is facilitated in much the same way as the transition from feeder elementary schools to middle school. Orientation meetings are held at the high school, and the transition process is facilitated by the middle school counselors. Teachers are knowledgeable about high school subject areas to ensure that the middle school curriculum provides students with the skills needed for high school success. Students and parents are informed about the progression of high school classes and how middle school class choices affect placements. Since most classes in ninth grade are heterogeneously grouped, students are not labeled by ability level.

An Introduction to High School class is offered in summer school to facilitate a smooth transition. Student data are transferred through the student data system, and the special needs and at-risk children are flagged for additional support in the fall. More importantly, the middle school's philosophy is to not offer high school classes in middle school to accelerate students. Staff at Medea has made a conscious decision to offer a wide variety of electives to give middle grades students an opportunity to explore new areas of

learning. The emphasis is placed on semester classes that can offer a myriad of experiences and act as a springboard for further study in high school.

Providing a smooth transition process is essential for any middle school. Middle schools have only three years to bridge the elementary experience of acquiring the essential building block skills for the world of college preparation. By building students' confidence with change by providing support for students' success, and by creating a world for students that makes learning exciting, the middle school can be a critical factor in making students' secondary academic experiences and their attitudes about school a positive one.

By Laurel Ford, Principal, Medea Creek Middle School
E-mail: lford@opusd.k12.ca.us

Resources & News

- **NASDAQ* National Teaching Awards**

The National Council on Economic Studies announced the 2004 application cycle for the NASDAQ Teaching Awards. Designed to advance economic literacy in our nation's middle and high schools, teachers of grades six through twelve who incorporate economic education into the classroom—in any subject area—are eligible to apply. Awards range from \$1,000 to a \$25,000 grand prizewinner. Applications are due **July 31, 2004**. <http://www.ncee.net/ea/program.php?pid=6>

*NASDAQ Stock Market, Inc.

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers Grants**

Funding is available for after-school or before- and after-school programs that serve students, kindergarten through grade nine, in high poverty communities. Programs must include academic assistance and educational enrichment components for students and must address literacy needs of adult family members. Deadline for application submittal is **August 20, 2004**. For specific eligibility requirements and application materials go to <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/cf/profile.asp?id=487>

- **Nickelodeon “Let’s Just Play” Grants**

The Nickelodeon organization announced the availability of the second season of its Let’s Just Play grant campaign. Approximately 25 to 50 grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 will be awarded to elementary schools, middle schools, and after-school programs to provide resources to create and expand opportunities for active physical play in their educational programs. Applications must be postmarked by **November 1, 2004**. See the Nickelodeon Web site for further information and the application at http://www.nick.com/all_nick/everything_nick/.

- **Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage 2005 Application & Criteria**

The 2005 Schools to Watch – Taking Center Stage (STW-TCS) application process is under way. Applications are due October 15, 2004, and the application materials are now available on the California League of Middle Schools' Web site at <http://www.clms.net>. You may also want to view the school self-rating rubric that is accessible on the California Department of Education's Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/mg/documents/criteria.pdf> to see where you are on the road to high performance.

- **Promising Practices for Afterschool Database**

The Center for Youth Development and Policy Research at the Academy for Education Development continues to look for promising practices in seven component areas that reflect a successful after-school-related strategy or curriculum. Those practices designated as promising are posted in the national database of promising practices located at <http://www.afterschool.org/>.

- **KIDS COUNT 2004 Data Book Online**

KIDS COUNT is a powerful online database funded and maintained by the Annie E. Casey Foundation that tracks the status of children in the United States. The Foundation uses ten key measures to construct an index of child well-being that is used to rank states and to provide supplemental data on education, health, and economic conditions for each state. The online data book and interactive presentation of data are located at <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/databook/>.

Looking Ahead...

Year 2004

- | | |
|------------|--|
| July 14-23 | Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)
2004 Principals' Center Summer Institute—UCLA Campus,
Los Angeles, California. http://www.acsa.org/ |
| July 18-21 | National Middle School Association (NMSA)
2004 Institute for Middle Level Leadership
Breckenridge, Colorado.
http://www.nmsa.org/development/leadership_04/ |
| July 18-22 | ACSA's 2004 Colloquium for New and Aspiring Principals
UCLA Campus
Los Angeles, California. http://www.acsa.org/ |

- July 29-30 **ACSA/CALSA 2004 Summer Institute**
 Sheraton San Diego, California. <http://www.acsa.org/>
- August 1-3 **California League of Middle Schools (CLMS)**
 The Janet Allen Content Literacy Institutes--*Framing Best Practices*
 Indian Wells, California
<http://www.clms.net/conferences/summer04.htm>
- August 2-13 **Central Coast Science Project**
 Summer Science Invitational Leadership Institute 2004—
English Language Development Through Science
 California Polytechnic State University/Peterson Elem. School
 Contact Grace Neff via e-mail at gneff@calpoly.edu or call 805-756-1687
- October 25-26 **High Performance High School Summit**
 California Department of Education
 Sacramento Convention Center
 Sacramento, California. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>
- November 4-6 **NMSA's 31st Annual Conference and Exhibit**
Navigating the Waters of Change
 Minneapolis, Minnesota. <http://www.nmsa.org/annual/>
- Nov. 11-13 **15th Education Trust National Conference**
Closing the Gap: No Small Roles in Big Change
 Washington, D.C. Registration begins in August.
<http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust>

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